POETRY

Your full name won’t fit the form

by Carlos A. Pittella

"Last Wish" by Daria Konshtik

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The Latin tongue made *Exocoetus*
out of the Ancient Greek ?????????, meaning
“sleeping outside” (literally “outside bed”),
which gave the family name *Exocoetidae*
to all flying fish stranded midair.

How many layers of bureaucracy
to trap a flying fish? A stubborn one
that flaps and flaps overboard
slipping away through oil,
the natural oil of your hands…

It’s a freak accident my surname
ended up with so many double consonants:
you catch a ‘t’ — here’s another
to cross; you lick an ‘l’ — its twin
lingers below your borrowed tongue.

I often wonder, what is the fraying line
between boat and ocean? Of course
it’s *not* drowning, but that’s just
fishermen-talk. For the actual fish flapping
it’s not crushing under a wall of air.

So I flap and I jack through layers,
geologic layers of documents,
as I wade into a new sea,
the same water rebaptized
by tiny owners.

Siegfried and Roy cannot agree
on one, so they have named it
Siegfried’s sea / Roy’s sea
while the fish (slithering between)
files more paperwork to just breathe.

Adult diapers
and all sorts of unrecyclable plastic
clog the way, catching on scales,
and they don’t need permits

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to float an island of crap.

I, who want to flap unlabeled once,
need a form to subsist and by “form”
I mean not my metamorphic body
but plant tissue dissolving in waters
of an acidic language. The tides

are turning — tsk tsk — churning,
and we are all about to butter.
It took me eight years for my first renaming.
I forget how many countries have notarized
this improper fish of molting names

and I’ve now swallowed the scientific one
and have no intention to spell it out
lest they give me another
fucking “*sapiens sapiens*” form
to sign with my bare tail.

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